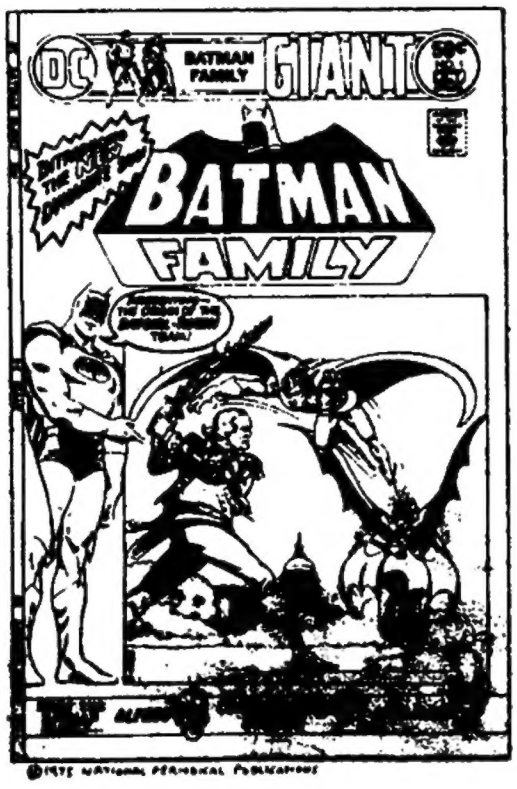
THE LATEST COMIC NEWS, REVIEWS AND COMMENT

BEMUSING MAGAZINE COMIC MART SPECIAL

JUNE
#6
BIGGER
10p
BETTER

ALL STAR COMICS RETURNS - OMAC CANCELLED - PLASTIC MAN, DR FATE RETURN

"2001" BY KIRBY - MONSTER BOOKS AXED - MARVEL SUPER-ACTION ANNOUNCED



REACTION

Send your letters to: Martin Lock

Dear Martin,

Bem ≠5 achieved a nice balance, and the larger size gives it a more meaty feel. Nice to see you scooped everybody with the Kirby news. As you said, it will be interesting to see what happens now.

As I think I said at the Mart, a lot of cover repros seem to sell a mag faster, so perhaps that will be your format from now on. More Ed Sallis, he gets in everywhere, doesn't he? More fanzines coming out these days, which is nice to see.

All in all, a good issue. I see I was mentioned twice in the Bem ad, you won't get many subscribers that way...

Nigel Edwards ...er, what was that address again?

Orpington? Hornsea? Hulkbuster Base? Don't ask me, Nige. You're right about the cover repros selling Bem, but I hope to fit in a little fan art on the cover in future; Bem isn't just a newszine, after all. I agree that the current fanzine boom is nice to see - anything that helps keep the CM News fanzine reviewer out of mischief is good!

Dear Martin,

Thanks for Bem ≠5. It was a real treat, all the articles in it were super, and the artwork was great. It must be difficult to produce a fanzine like Bemusing, and do articles for numerous other fanzines as well -- and with FU going monthly it'll be even harder.

Anyway, thanks for a really entertaining fanzine.

Gary Bentley.

Difficult? Yes. Impossible? No! I enjoy it -- and, as long as other people don't seem to mind, I'll probably go on!

Dear Martin,

Congratulations on Bem 5, which I picked up at the Man-Con on April 26th. While it was my first exposure to your zine, I certainly don't intend it to be the last, and will subscribe as soon as I can scrape up the money! You've achieved the best balance of any fanzine I've yet encountered, and I hope you continue in this vein, with Bem remaining primarily a news and reviews zine, complete with all those fascinating cover repros. But don't ignore entirely those titles unobtainable in the UK...if I am not to be allowed to read them by the powers-that-be, I would at least like to keep up with what I'm missing.

Particularly appreciated is the Fan-Things section, and the Bem Fanzine Directory. The latter should prove helpful to me in tracking down a copy of the notorious Comics Analysis --nobody can tell me where to find a copy!

Anyway, thanks again for producing such an entertaining and useful zine.

Howard Stangroom.

And thank you for a very useful letter of comment, Howard. I'd say more, but Reaction has already squeezed the editorial out of this Bem; let's leave some room for news...

Dear Martin,

Brilliant. That's what I think of Bem 5. The part on Fatlas was very good; keep up Fan-Things, I like seeing reviews of zines in other fanzines. The news of Jack Kirby coming back to Marvel is great; if he can do work for Marvel like he did for DC he'll be all right. Conway going to DC is a shock to Marvel, but I can't wait to see his new scripts for National.

Marc Evans.

continued on page 12...

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T-U-S-

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MARVEL NEW TITLES AND ONE-SHOTS

Out in July (cover-dated October) come ADVENTURES ON THE PLANET OF THE APES, with reprints from the black & white magazine, THE CHAMPIONS super-team by Isabella and Heck, CHILLERS with new mystery stories we would have seen in Giant-Size Chillers if that format had survived, THE INHUMANS by Doug Moench and George Perez, RED SONJA, a one-shot by Roy Thomas & Dick Giordano, STARHAWK AND THE GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY, or maybe without poor ol' Starhawk, and WARLOCK, continuing with ≠9.

Probable for August are HOWARD THE DUCK by Gerber and Brunner, IRON FIST, and THE SCARECROW after his one-shot appearance in Dead of Night, while September sees MARVEL ADVENTURE (Daredevil reprints) and SON OF SATAN by John David Warner & Sal Buscema, while in October the BLACK GOLIATH title is due. MARVEL PREMIERE is to become a new showcase-type book, with future features to include Satana, Hercules, Black Knight, and the Impossible Man. MARVEL SPOTLIGHT and STRANGE TALES are going reprint, with Doc Strange as star of Strange Tales.

The new black & white magazines are THOR (subject to title change), set in the days of the Vikings and scheduled for September, LEGION OF MONSTERS, which is to continue the Thomas-Giordano adaptation of Dracula, plus in ≠1 Frankenstein and Manphibian, in ≠2 Morbius and Lilith, an SF title called STARLORD with regular characters, MASTERS OF TERROR (a 2-shot on horror classics, edited by Isabella), MARVEL SUPER-ACTION, developed from Marvel Preview ≠2, starring The Punisher, Ka-Zar, Dominic Fortune, and Black Widow, and SHERLOCK HOLMES, written by Doug Moench.

The MARVEL CLASSICS COMICS will come out this Autumn, reprinting Now-Age paperback adaptations done last year by Phillipine artists. ≠1 is "Dr Jeckyll and Mr Hyde" by Nestor Redondo, ≠2 "The Time Machine" by Nino, ≠3 "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" by June LoFamia, and ≠4 "20,000 Leagues Under The Sea" by Rudy Gamboa & E. Patricio.

For the peak summer sales period, quite a few extra reprint books are going on sale; a line of one-shot 50 cent Giant-Sizers starts in July with Daredevil, Iron Man, Hulk, Fantastic Four, & Powerman, all dated 1975; black & white Summer Specials start in June with TALES OF THE ZOMBIE and MONSTERS UNLEASHED, going on in July with DRACULA LIVES, DEADLY HANDS, SAVAGE TALES, and SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN, and in August with VAMPIRE TALES, CRAZY, and MONSTERS OF THE MOVIES --if any of the black and white magazines come to this country (and let's hope they do), they'll come out a good two months later.

continued...

MARVEL CHANGES

There are changes in the Treasury-size magazines. There won't be a SILVER SURFER book - and SAVAGE HANDS OF KUNG FU is only a one-shot. WIZARD OF OZ (John Buscema and Roy Thomas) and 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (by Jack Kirby) will both appear quarterly; a new series like MARVEL TREASURY EDITION is to appear soon, MARVEL SPECIAL EDITION.

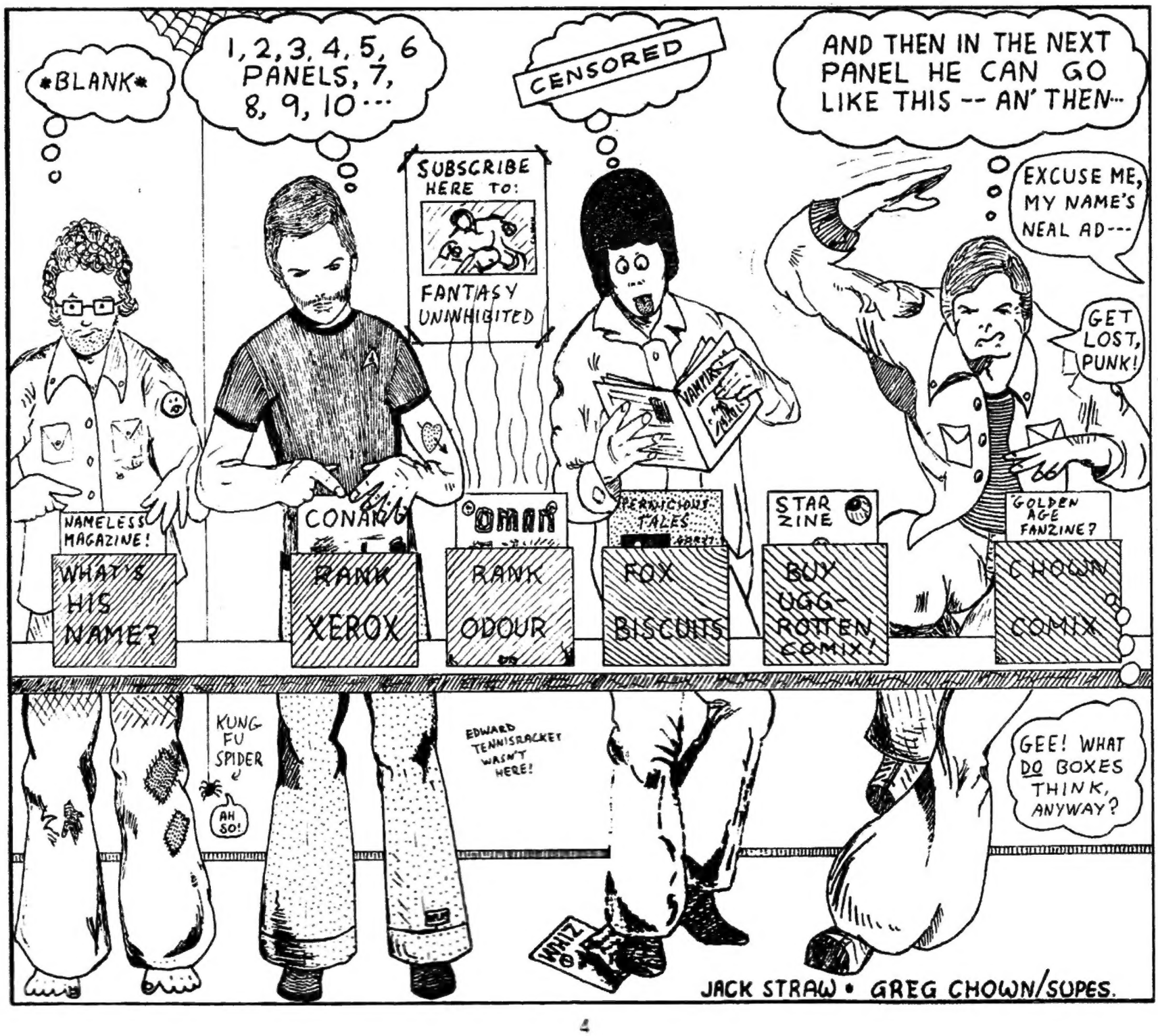
Contrary to previous reports, Kirby's new contract with Marvel is exclusive.

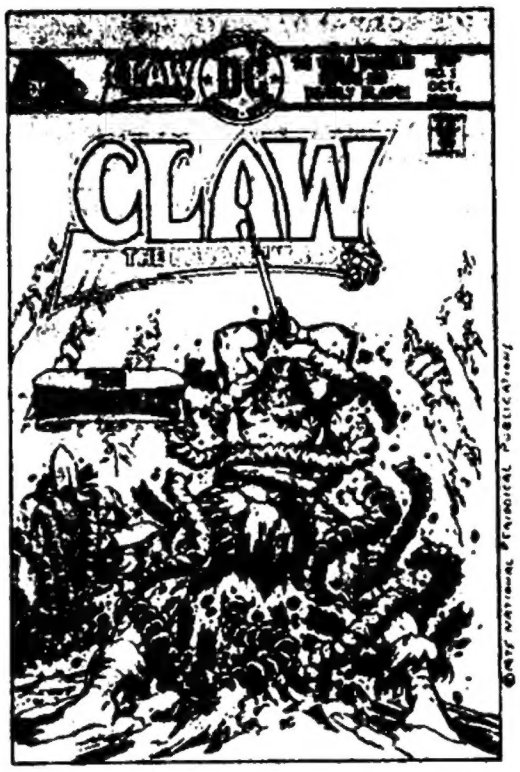
Marv Wolfman is now editor-in-chief; Len Wein is his associate, working on cover layouts with Gil Kane. Archie Goodwin is editor-in-chief of the black & whites with John David Warner editing the articles and Don McGregor editing DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU; Daring Duffy Vohland has taken over as editor of the British weeklies.

WAR IS HELL finishes with #15; UNKNOWN WORLDS OF SF will have type-set lettering from #7; Ken Barr has done covers for DOC SAVAGE and PLANET OF THE APES; Ron Wilson takes over art on MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE; Steve Skeates and Frank Robbins have done fill-in issues of MAN-THING; George Perez is now on THE AVENGERS; Bill Mantlo is scripting MARVEL TEAM-UP, and a couple of fill-in THORs; Len Wein is taking over the writing of IRON MAN and THOR; Billy Graham may be leaving JUNGLE ACTION.

SON OF ORIGINS OF MARVEL COMICS is to feature the origins of The Silver Surfer, Iron Man, Nick Fury, X-Men, The Watcher, The Avengers, and Daredevil.

ONE COMIC MART DAY AT THE EMLOCK TABLE (Save for Future Reference?)





CONWAY'S NEW TITLES FOR DC NAMED

MAN-BAT's first issue will be written by Gerry Conway, with Marty Pasko taking over from ≠2; the artists for the series are to be Steve Ditko and Al Milgrom, while Jim Aparo will be doing the covers.

ALL STAR COMICS, written by Conway with art by Ric Estrada and Wally Wood, will be the home of "The Super Squad", an up-dated version of the Justice Society, with the Earth-2 Flash, Green Lantern, Dr Mid-Nite, Hawkman, Dr Fate, Wildcat, and 3 newcomers -- Robin, in the Adams-designed costume, Star Spangled Kid, inheriting Starman's cosmic rod, and Earth-2's equivalent of Supergirl, called Power Girl.

BLACKHAWK returns after a gap of 6 years with ≠244, drawn by George Evans, scripted by Steve Skeates, and edited by Conway.

KAMANDI will be written and edited by Conway from ≠38 on. Kirby, before he left, drew up to ≠40; when this backlog is used up, the decision will be made whether or not to continue the title.

SUPER-TEAM (or Super-Team Family) is to feature non-Batman team-ups. After an all-reprint first issue, a Metal Men story by Steve Gerber and a Wildcat-Creeper team-up by Denny O'Neil are on the cards, but the regular scripter will be Paul Levitz.

Other Conway projects include a few new 1st Issue Specials--a PLASTIC MAN issue is to be written by Steve Skeates, and DOCTOR FATE will also be solo-starred, with art by Walt Simonson, while CODE NAME: ASSASIN and FREEDOM FIGHTERS are also planned.

DC EXPANDS 50-CENT "FAMILY" LINE

Following high sales of SUPERMAN FAMILY, other 50-cent 68-page "Family" books are planned. Conway's SUPER-TEAM we've covered already; the next two are:

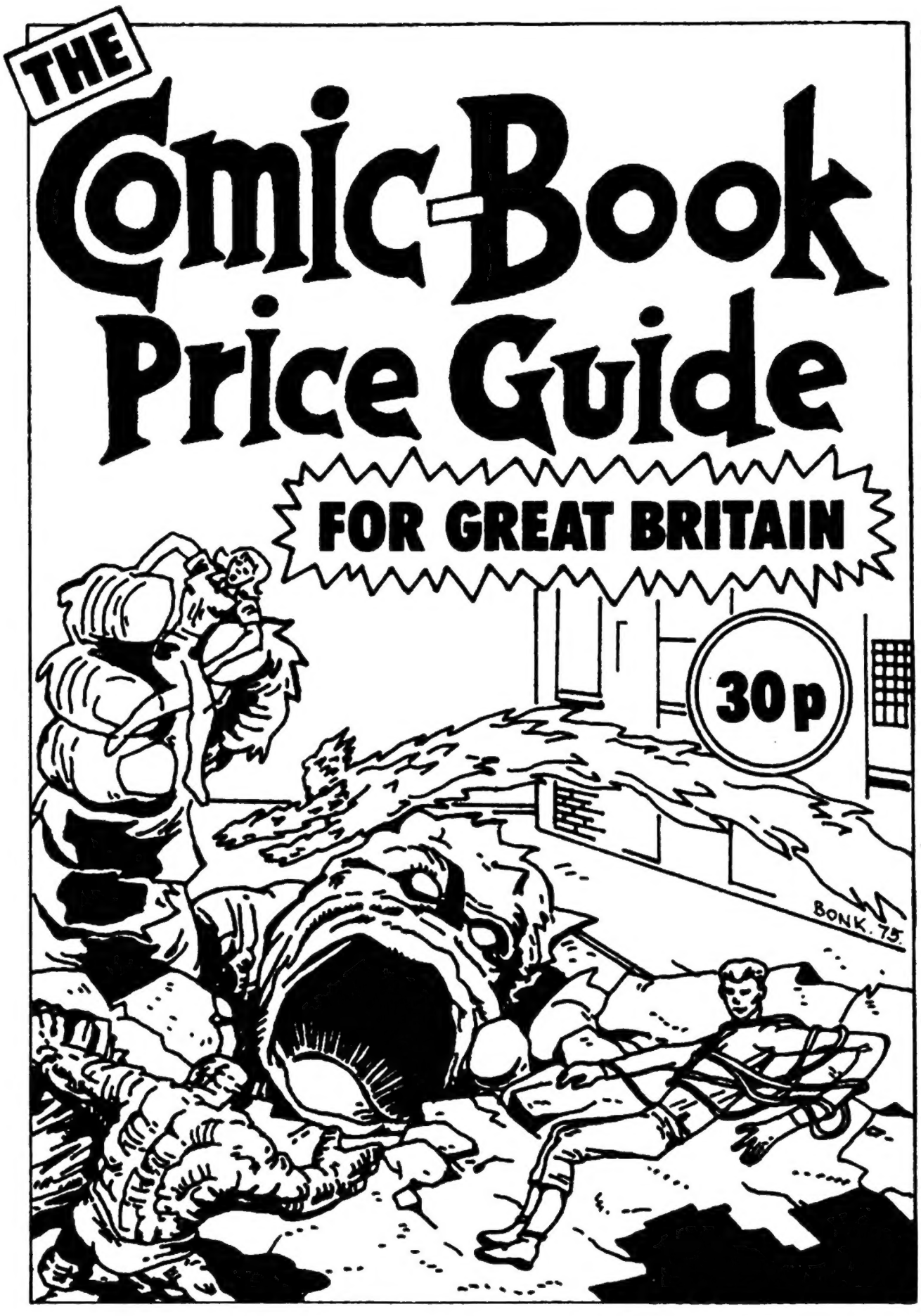
THE BATMAN FAMILY (see front cover) will feature, either teamed (as in ≠1) or solo-starring, BATGIRL and ROBIN; reprints will focus on Alfred, Commissioner Gordon, Man-Bat, and, judging by The Superman Family, Batmite and Ace the Bat-hound before long. Julius Schwartz will be the editor.

THE TARZAN FAMILY starts with ≠60, taking over where KORAK left off. The reprints we saw in the 100-page TARZAN books should take up residence in the back - of course, the editor and cover artist is Joe Kubert.

The cancelation of the Giant size issues of regular titles means that JOKER goes to bimonthly, and SWAMP THING advances to 8 times yearly, with the 25-page tale of the lost arm rewritten into two 18-page parts. DC SPECIAL is now bimonthly - ≠18 features "Earth-Shaking Disasters".

OMAC ends with ≠8. OUR FIGHTING FORCES will be edited by Boltinoff when the Kirby material runs out; Kirby contributions to 1st Issue Special scheduled are DINGBATS (≠6, Sept), and KING COBRA. SANDMAN will continue, with Ditko and Wood artwork--Ric Estrada & Wally Wood are to take over the art on JUSTICE INC and KUNG FU FIGHTER.

Following good mail response, METAMORPHO should soon return. SHAZAM is going over to reprints - and Pat Boyette is to be the PERMANENT inker on CLAW. Chee!



FANTASY UNLIMITED PUBLICATIONS:

THE COMIC BOOK PRICE GUIDE FOR GREAT BRITAIN

72 pages listing prices for almost every comic from 1959 up to today. Much other data's also included -- all Adams comics are listed, for example. The rare & non-distributed issues are also indicated.

Price: 30 pence, plus 8p p&p.

THE MARVEL SUPER-HERO INDEX

72 FU-size pages crammed with all you want to know about Marvel and their comics. The title, and full writer, artist, and inker credits are included for every super-hero tale published by Marvel from FF #1 for ten years-- all for only 38p, post included.

Besides these indispensable guides for comics fans, Fantasy Unlimited Publications also publishes Britain's only zine devoted to 1940s comics and pulps, THE GOLDEN AGE FANZINE (issue 2 due soon, 20p), and the main monthly fanzine, FANTASY UNLIMITED -- published monthly (20p, or four issues for 70p), featuring top articles, "We Want Information" with the answers to your comics questions, "Worlds of Emlock", fan art, a comics quiz, and the most comprehensive listing of comics for sale around.

FROM: Fantasy Unlimited

CHARLTON: E-MAN CANCELATION SHOCK

E-MAN is cancelled after ≠10, September; if you're as fond of this title as I am, please write to Nick Cuti and tell him so. The address is: Charlton Publications Inc, Charlton Building, Division Street, Derby, Conn. 06418, USA --airmail postage is 10p. However, Charlton's distribution in this country seems in doubt at the moment, so we may miss E-Man 8-10 anyway.

Charlton are to publish two comics about SPACE 1999, to appear in mid September. A 25-cent title will be drawn by Joe Staton; a black & white magazine will feature Gray Morrow art. Both are written by Nick Cuti.

Don Newton is to take over the art side of THE PHANTOM soon.

CHARLTON BULLSEYE ≠2 has an E-Man colour cover, and the conclusion of the new Ditko Cap Atom story; ≠3 has a full-length Sanho Kim "Wrong Country" Kung Fu strip. Future issues'll feature new E-Man stories, until his own comic is resumed (I hope).

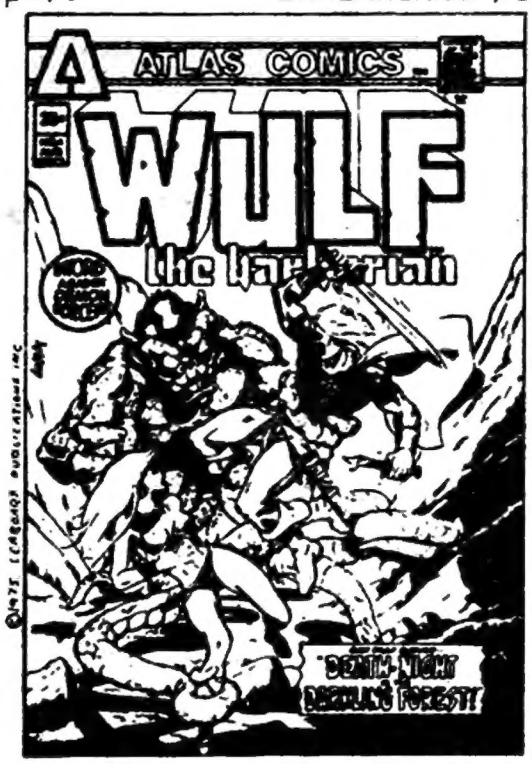
ATLAS-SEABOARD: LESS TITLES

The list of July-published titles is:-

TALES OF EVIL ≠4 (The Scorpion)
TARGITT ≠4
DEMON HUNTER ≠2
THE BARBARIANS ≠3
PHOENIX ≠5
IRONJAW ≠6
PLANET OF VAMPIRES ≠5
BRUTE ≠5
COUGAR ≠4
WULF ≠6

MAN-MONSTER vacates Tales of Evil, and gets his own title, to be drawn by Rich Buckler, Keith Pollard, Arvell Jones, and Aubrey Bradford, and written by Dave Kraft and Jim Lawrence. Frank Springer will take over the SON OF DRACULA strip in FRIGHT.

Alan Kupperberg & Frank Giacoia did the last issue (≠3) of COUGAR, and will take over TARGITT. JEREMIAH BLOODHAWK debuts in BARBARIANS ≠3, created by Dave Kraft.



THE BEMUSING MAGAZINE FANZINE DIRECTORY, PART III...

ALPHA
current issue ≠7
3 issues for 30p,
6 issues for 58p.

from:
Darryl Bird.

STARZINE
current issue ≠2
bimonthly, 20p by post; 4 issues for 75p.

from:
Andrew Johnson.

WARRIOR
current issue ≠4
monthly, 25p by post; 4 issues for £1.00.

from:
Penwith Productions

NAMELESS ZINE
current issue ≠3
bimonthly, 15p by post.

from:
Nigel Edwards.

Please enclose an s.a.e. with any enquiry, and allow a fortnight for replies. There'll be more addresses in Bem-7 - previous instalments were in Bem-4 & Bem-5. --ML

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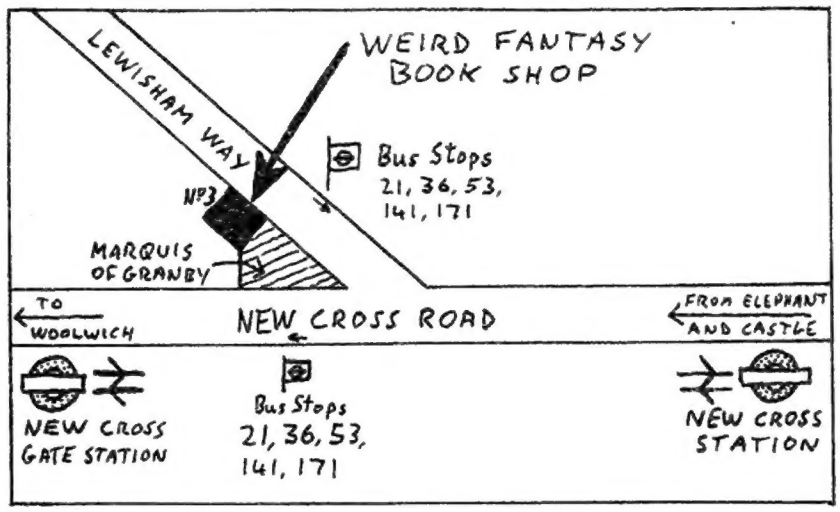

COMICS WITH ART BY NEAL ADAMS @ £1.00 EACH

The Spectre ≠2, 4
Teen Titans ≠21
Strange Adventures ≠207,209,214 (Deadman)
Amazing Adventures ≠5, 6
Thor ≠181
Brave & Bold ≠93
Worlds Finest ≠175
X-Men ≠61

MISCELLANEOUS COMICS

Fighting American ≠1 ('66) @75p 60pp Kirby
Showcase ≠61, 64 (Spectre) @ 50p each
Spectre ≠1 @ 75p, ≠8, 10 @ 30p each
Showcase ≠83, 84 @ £1.00 each (Both feature Nightmaster by Berni Wrightson)
Showcase ≠75 @ 75p (Hawk & Dove by Ditko)
Hawk & Dove ≠1 @ 75p, ≠2 @ 50p (Both Ditko)
Hawk & Dove ≠4, 5 @ 30p (Both by Gil Kane)
Jimmy Olsen ≠133, 134 @ 75p each (Kirby)
All-Star Western ≠3 @ £1.00 (Origin of El Diablo by Gray Morrow)
Mr Miracle ≠1 (Kirby) @ £1.00
New Gods ≠1 (Kirby) @ £1.00
Fantastic Four ≠6 (Sept 1962) @ £6.00
Amazing Spider-Man ≠9 (Feb 1964) @ £4.00
Captain Atom (Ditko) ≠80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89 @ 50p each

ATLAS COMICS @ 10p each

Grim Ghost ≠1, 2
Iron Jaw ≠1, 2
Tiger-Man ≠1
Tales of Evil ≠1
Phoenix ≠1, 2
Scorpion ≠1
Brute ≠1
Targitt ≠1
Planet of Vampires ≠1
Wulf the Barbarian ≠1, 2
Weird Suspense ≠1
Morlock 2001 ≠1, 2
Western Action ≠1
Police Action ≠1, 2
Savage Combat Tales ≠1,2
Destructor ≠1 (Ditko)

MAGAZINES (NEW ARRIVALS)

Vampirella ≠39, 41, 42 @ 50p ea, ≠40 @ 75p
Eerie ≠63, 65 @ 50p each
Vampirella (English Full Colour Issues) ≠1, 2, 3 @ 30p each
Devilina ≠2 @ 50p

COMICS (RED CIRCLE)

Sorcery ≠3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 @ 15p each
Mad-House ≠95, 96, 97 @ 15p each

COMICS -- WAY BACK ISSUES

Marvel Family (Fawcett) ≠83 (1953)nm @ £5
Marvel Family (Fawcett) ≠82 (1953)fair @ £3
Captain Marvel (Fawcett) ≠50 (1945)g @ £5
Big Shot (CCG) ≠91 (1948) very good @ £3 (Boody Rogers art plus SKYMAN)
The Funnies (Dell) ≠25 (1938) @ £8.00 nm (Capt Easy, Alley Oop, Scribbly etc)
Famous Funnies (Dell) ≠51 (1938) @ £8.00 (Buck Rogers etc... vg condition)
All Top Comics (Fox) ≠15 (1949) @ £3.00 vg--cfo but Rulah and the Phantom Lady stories are complete
Star Spangled War Stories (DC) ≠16 (1953) vg @ £2.00
Funnyman (ME) ≠2 (1948) fair @ £2.00 Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster art
Texas Slim and Dirty Dalton (A-1) ≠4 (1945) near mint @ £2.00
Freelance (AA) ≠35 (1946) nm @ £2.00
Jamboree Comics (Round Pub Co) ≠1 (1945) nm @ £2.00 (Captain Power)
AND MORE!

For our next list, send a stamped addressed envelope to:

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FAN-THINGS

A COLUMN OF FAN NEWS AND FANZINE REVIEWS, CONDUCTED FOR BEMUSING BY ED SALLIS

Well, I had hoped for more (2) pages for this feature this time, thanks to the kind reception given it by Bem readers, but it seems Bemusing has a space shortage this time; as Martin has cut his Tale-Enders to a single page as well, I can't object too much. And who'd complain about sharing a page with Ms Nova Kane?

One fan publisher whose activities I can never predict is Rob Barrow. As I write this (26th May), CFB ≠3 has still not appeared, but there have been one or two delays beyond his control--he promises to have it ready soon.

As a prelude to issue 1 of UTOPIA, Kev Clarke and Chris Wiggin are, I hear, bringing forward OBLIVION, its companion adzine, to release late in June; it will contain reviews, articles and of course details of UTOPIA itself.

ALPHA ≠7 (see fanzine directory) is stencil-printed--Darryl Bird's had a bit of trouble I fear, and some lines are near impossible to read - but apart from this drawback, it's up to Alpha's high standard, with good reviews of films, fanzines, and comics, plus a striking cover by Greg Chown. I hope Darryl overcomes the printing problems soon, but this fanzine is still well worth 10p.

Darryl's least favourite fanzine ("lifeless" and "boring") is FANTASY UNLIMITED. ≠27 will be out by the time you read this (FU's one fanzine one can be sure about), with a long main article on Silver Surfer, plus "Enter the Heroes" on Lois Lane, and the regular features--see Alan Austin's ad on page six for the price and address. For my money, FU is one of the indispensable fanzines, with a flavour all its own.

THE CREEPING FANZINE DISEASE 10p by post from Eric Reinders,

is a newly-published fanzine. ≠1 has ten tight-packed pages of features and reviews; good it is not, but interesting and promising, yes.

Martin mentioned last time that WORLD OF HORROR ≠6 had a page of fanzine reviews, including Bem; well, ≠7 features Glimpse, Alpha, TBS, Comic Media, Morphious, and CM News--that sort of competition I like! The rest of the issue's interesting too, with SPACE 1999, FLESH GORDON (with George Barr art), PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE, and more.

Dez Skinn's FANTASY ADVERTISER ≠56 is due now--if it doesn't make it for the Mart it should be along in a fortnight or so, with a talk with veteran writer Frank Pepper on scripting comics. A new Penwith Production will be STARFALL, reprinting SF strips.

TBS ≠4 25p from George Barnett,

should be out now, printers permitting--36 thrill-packed pages, and a crisp black and white cover, with articles on von Daniken, Doc Savage, TV superheroes, and the FF, and strips by Greg Chown ("The Stomp") and Phil Ruffell ("Devil Riders"), and a couple of text stories, one by Martin Lock. It all sounds very interesting to me...

Greg Chown's UGG-ROTTEN COMIX, fandom's answer to Rutland Weekend TV, is due soon, with contributions from Andy Johnson, Jonn Hay, and the Scavengers Mob; about 10p in stamps to Greg

would reserve a copy.

The new CM NEWS (≠20) is out now - issue 21 will go up to 20p, and 16 pages, which may help stop the last-minute cutting (this time of a Man-Con report and zine reviews) we tend to get at the moment.

And watch out for "The Fanhunter File" in UTOPIA in a month or two--see you then!

REG USPATOFF'S AMERICA

The big news in the industry now is, of course, the Superman/Spider-Man team-up to be written by Gerry Conway and drawn by Andru & Esposito -- although rumour has it that the other guiders of the two heroes aren't too happy about that. The idea of a 100-page new adventure, in the large size, with the two heroes battling Luthor & Doc Ock, is truly breath-taking--it's going to be well worth the $2.00 price tag.

The large size seems as well established now as an alternative format can be, with both the DC 68-page dollar editions and the Marvel 100-page $1.50 treasury books featuring new material as well as reprints -- "SPIDER-MAN TREASURY EDITION" will be a bi-monthly reprint book, as MTE #1 was a sales success; however, the Silver Surfer book planned has been dropped for the time being. No more understandable is Stan Lee's decision to scrap almost the entire line of monster books - farewell, Werewolf, and Morbius, and Frankenstein Monster; Dracula also seems in danger, but, with Roy Thomas as adaptor of the original novel, he must have a greater chance of survival. Perhaps Lee fears a horror comics "witchhunt" like Wertham's anti-EC campaign in the fifties?

Remember the rumours of a new-look Marvel Girl a while ago? Well, Marvel have finally announced "Ms Marvel" as a bimonthly title --one last chance for a women's lib comic.

It's interesting that both Marvel and DC have plans for Sherlock Holmes, all of a sudden; Marvel's dollar black & white will adapt "Hound of the Baskervilles", while, for DC, Denny O'Neil plans to present his versions of "The Final Problem" (what sort of title is THAT to start with?) and "The Empty House", with E.R. Cruz. May the best sleuth win!

And some good news to end on; Len Wein's recovering nicely from kidney trouble, and well enough to put Herb Trimpe on Iron Man and Sal Buscema on Hulk, tie up loose ends of the Living Mummy in Hulk, bring back the Abomination, Harry Osborne, Man-Gog... -RU

WARREN MAGS RETURN TO BRITAIN

A series of VAMPIRELLA paperbacks, with cover paintings and text stories by Warren contributors, is being planned.

Inside covers on VAMPIRELLA #44 (August) are by Neal Adams.

CREEPY & EERIE are now being distributed in the UK, priced at 30p each. The British Edition of VAMPIRELLA now costs only 20p.

MULTI-MEDIA NEWS

Legend Publishing, the team behind the only adult British comic, plan that issue three of LEGEND HORROR CLASSICS in a month or so will feature "The 7th Voyage of Sinbad" to tie in with the film's new re-release. Jim Shier promises it will include a previously unseen poster of the Cyclops, plus a Kev O'Neill strip. Just out from Legend is a DR WHO fold-out mag, with plenty of photos. Both Legend Horror Classics and the Dr Who mag are available at newsagents, or by post at 32p each from Fantasy Unlimited.

The second DOC SAVAGE film, "Doc Savage-- Arch-Enemy of Evil" will have a screenplay by Philip José Farmer.

Scheduled for autumn TV in America are The Invisible Man (following a pilot film that Brian D. Berke found much too corny, and starring UNCLE's David McCallum), Matt Helm, Ellery Queen, the Mel Brooks version of Robin Hood called "When Things Were Rotten", and replacing the animated STAR TREK, "Beyond The Planet Of The Apes", a new cartoon series. "The Super Friends" is also cancelled, while the SHAZAM show is extended to an hour, with IBIS as co-star.

A second Wonder Woman TV movie, keeping closer to the comics original, is in the can - Blackhawk is still planned. And Stan Lee says Hanna-Barbera are going to make a series of "faithful" Marvel cartoons.

Mario Puzo (of "Godfather" fame) has now been named as scriptwriter of the ultimate disaster movie, the one that needs nobody less than SUPERMAN to save the day -- the actor for The Main Part has not yet been named.

A new British comic in the Marvel Weekly style, DEFIANT, will be published by CCT soon; the main artist, apparently, will be Phil Ruffell, whose art has been recently showcased in TBS.

Emlock Tale-Enders

Back in Bem-4, I started this column by giving the advantages of writing for one's own magazine; this time, the other side of the coin presents itself, as a shortage of space means a page or two has to be cut--my own Tale-Enders must be the first to be affected, or the other contributors would have good cause to protest. Oh, well...

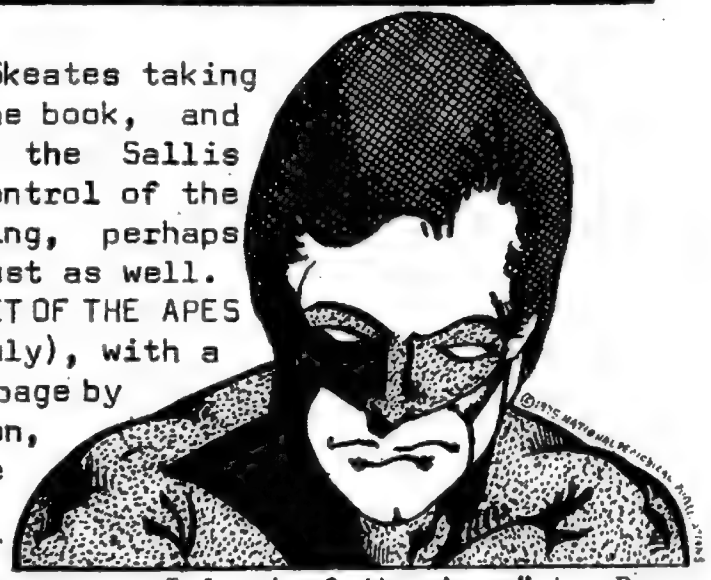
MARVEL PREMIERE ≠24 (Sept) is the final issue Iron Fist will leap about in -- he's off to his own title, but not taking Pat Broderick along - instead, John Byrne will take over the art. A certain SHIELD robot called "The Monstroid" gets clobbered this time--the Marvel softball team are also on hand, believe it or not!

The other Martial Artisan, Shang-Chi, is involved in a less light-hearted adventure "Assault on an Angry Sea", with the Moench story broken down by Sal Buscema and drawn by Mike Esposito, in MASTER OF KUNG FU ≠32 (Sept)--a good change of pace.

SUPER-VILLAIN TEAM-UP ≠1 (Aug) continues the Doc Doom/Sub-Mariner series from the 2 Giant-Size issues. We've 19 pages here of "Slayers From The Sea", including 2 or 3 pages pencilled a while ago by the late Bill Everett, plus Tuska and Evans. Tiger Shark, Dorcas, and Attuma are also on hand --I put this mag next to Namor's old book, it's nice that Subby's back in action. And of course he's also showcased in INVADERS ≠1 (Aug), which features new (Roy Thomas & Frank Robbins) wartime exploits of Namor, Captain America, Bucky, Human Torch, and Toro -- 19 pages from what would have been Giant-Size Invaders ≠2, "The Ring of the Nebulas", plus an editorial page by Thomas that reveals the book's going monthly with ≠2--and that is good news.

Tom Palmer hurt his back, so CONAN ≠53 (Aug) is inked by Frank Springer. I don't like to be nasty (heh, heh) but get well soon, Tom--John and Roy need you. Our hero meets three bloodthirsty fellows with an axe-hand, a knife-foot, and a battering-ram skull--guess who wins the battle.

MAN-THING ≠20 (Aug) is another fine issue by Steve Gerber and Jim Mooney - how can I break it to non-CM News readers that this book is cancelled after ≠22? Bad move, men of Marvel--but, since there was talk of Mr Steve Skeates taking over the book, and giving the Sallis mind control of the Man-Thing, perhaps it's just as well.



PLANET OF THE APES ≠10 (July), with a splash page by Simonson, has the second half of "Kingdom on an Island of the Apes" by Doug Moench and Rico Rival (33pp), and the fifth of six parts of "Beneath the PotA" by Doug (of course) and Alfredo Alcala (20pp). The Larkin cover isn't too good--in fact, they could use it on the British weekly, even!

"Who the fudge is that?" exclaims Green Arrow, as a red form materialises over the meeting table in JUSTICE LEAGUE ≠121 (Aug) --it's Adam Strange! The action on Earth & Rann comes fast and furious, with Kanjar Ro coming near to winning--but in the end, we witness a very special wedding, as virtue triumphs once more, and Rann is safe.

BEOWULF ≠3 has fine art and poor script once more; the artistic effects are truly breath-taking, while the use of reversed words like "Uoy taht si iniduoH yrraH" is icky-cute and distracting.

E-MAN ≠9 (see page 7), July, once again shows up 99% of the comics produced; it's a pity not all the covers have been up to the standard of the interiors, or the book mightn't have been cancelled. I suppose we ought to thank Charlton for producing ten wonderful issues, rather than blame them for the cancelation, but I'd have thought such a book was worth persevering with.

MORLOCK 2001 AND THE MIDNIGHT MEN No.3, July, continues the Atlas tradition of re-working all the books they don't cancel --but, thanks to Gary Friedrich, Ditko and Wrightson, it's an improvement in every department, even if Morlock's rôle seems subsidiary to the chief Midnight Man.

Gosh, is that the bottom of the page down there, so near? And me with all these mags left! Oh well, I'll find some fanzine to review 'em in, in a few weeks... -ML

REACTION - Continued from page 2...

Dear Martin,

Many thanks for the letter, and the copy of Bem-5 -- a big improvement, if only for the increased page count.

Well, what do we get for our ten shekels? A nicely set out cover, though, as you pointed out, unfortunately it was a little off-centre. Quite a few interesting bits of news as well--it does help if I buy Bem early, instead of leaving it till all the news is dated, you know! I'll have to try it more often.

I see the "Insider" didn't strike this time around -- maybe that's just as well, considering the ruckuss over the last one; instead, we get a page of the latest info from the Fanhunter himself (nice plug for Utopia as well - thanks, Ed). As he quite rightly points out, the Austin/Cruden feud has been going on for just a little too long now--time someone put a stop to it.

What else is there? Ah yes, FATLAS comics had me in stitches. Ol' Superswipe seems to render humour beautifully, what with Conman vs Spidey and now this; what can we expect from him next?

Seems you managed to stretch Reaction to two pages nicely, though little fillers of space like the "Bits from the Bemused and Bedazzled Mailbag" give me the impression that people still aren't taking the trouble to send in their LoC - what do you have to do these days, give free comics for LoCs?

And that just leaves the reviews -- most of them I've just received myself, though it's nice to read other people's opinions of them. Emlock Tale-Enders offered some nice surprises, though - mostly June/July issues which I shan't get from my importer for a couple of weeks yet. How d'you do it?

Other commendable points -- twenty cover repros, worth the 10p just for them, and as usual beautiful layouts (that space-typing must drive you utterly crazy) and good quality printing! What more can a freaky panelologist ask for, for his last florin?

Chris R. Wiggin.

How about an extra four pages, for a start, Chris? Superswipe thanks you for the kind words; but he doesn't want to take all the credit for "Fatlas" -- it was devised and scripted by Pete April and Jack Straw, all he had to do was a simplified version of the well-known Atlas house ad.

Dear Martin,

First of all, last time you wrote to me you asked if there was some way I'd like to contribute to Bem. Well, for a start, I wouldn't mind being editor (yuk yuk)!!

Bem #5 was great, it gets better every issue -- nice to see you took note of my advice. Keep Fan-Things, it made the whole issue even better. The "Fatlas" page was highly amusing, great stuff! I know Iron Jaw is supposed to be lusty, but "Ger 'em off", really!

One idea for starting a mini-controversy in Reaction (most 'zine lettercols seem to have one now): why not ask readers their opinions on censorship in comics? Should the "Comics Code Authority" be abolished? I think it should. What do you think? What do other readers think?

Congratulations on Bem #5.

Kevin O'Donnell.

If you thought Iron Jaw's comments rather direct, you should have seen Jack & Pete's original version...

Dear Martin,

Today probably ranks as one of the most frustrating days I can remember. The main reason for this can only be attributed to my buying your magazine.

Frustrating, because Bem-5 shows cover repros of those Marvel comics I desperately want (nay, need) but can't get. Being only new to comics, and even newer--an hour or so--to your mag, I find it almost impossible to obtain the Marvels not normally on sale --Spider-Man, Hulk, Avengers, Giant-Sizers, etc. I see from letters in Bem that this is quite a common problem, and one you're probably sick and tired of dealing with; I have managed a few from 'Dark They Were...', but continuity seems to be almost out of the question.

In a world gone sour with inflation, violence, and strikes you are my only hope --I'm relying on you to solve my problem.

Maurice Cousins.

I'm afraid I've got no easy answer. But if you go to Comic Marts, and the two-day con in August, you'll find a wider selection of imports at a penny to the cent, which is really a terribly high price, and with luck a few a bit cheaper; otherwise, I understand that Paul Burton does bring the rare Marvel titles in by air mail and will take a standing order.

Dear Martin,

Comic Media News has, in the past, been the UK's only news source; it gave fandom cover repros, reviews, and, above all, information on the comics front that was always 99% correct. However, as time goes by, we are gifted with a sudden influx of other newszines; amongst them we see the likes of Comic Fandom Bulletin and The Panelologist, both of which fail to give any news anyway, one because it comes out too late and the other because it has no news to print, and of course your own Bem. This last is the only one you could term a success (for the reasons quoted earlier), since Bemusing consistently improves with each issue until, with your latest issue, you finally show yourself as a worthy competitor to CMN.

Since I agree with Mike Cruden (or at least I think it was him) that a letter full of praise is worthless (good for the ego, but worthless nevertheless) I shall try and find ways I would improve Bem. Perhaps you went a little too far with the cover repros, I mean look at the size of CMN compared with Bem. And Ed Sallis is worthy of an extra page for your "Fanzine Directory"--we really need someone to keep on top of all the fan activities these days, take that piece about Paul Burton's adzine, that was the first time anyone had taken the time to find out what that was all about--a first for both Bem and Ed.

The Review Section was (as always) up to the high standard we have come to expect from you and the rest of the gang -- I'm glad you seem to have shaken off the old taboo of "Not Reproducing a Warren Cover" that most zines seem to have inflicted on themselves, why I don't know. Why not drop a few DC/Marvel covers and extend it to Creepy and Eerie.

I loved Superswipe's "Fatlas" page, his work is really too much. (Too much WHAT?) What chance is there of seeing Bem come out monthly? This is a step FU has just taken, and I'm sure your sales would go up if you followed suit.

Kevan Clarke.

No chance, Kev; no time. I hope Bem isn't direct competition for CM News, or indeed any fanzine - buy us all, everyone. More Ed Sallis? Certainly. Less cover repros? A good idea. Warren covers? Well, they have solid greys - see page 7 of Bem-4 for what can happen. Line drawings are much better.

Dear Martin,

Bemusing #5, the prime catalyst of this letter, showed up recently -- thanks for printing my letter, even though it did contain some stuff that looked rather odd out of context. Of late, it seems one can't pick up a British fanzine without running into the Cruden/Austin controversy!

I continue to see your ubiquitous reviews everywhere, and generally agree with them; though I wasn't as fond of the late RIMA as you were. The art was superb, but the stories, especially after the adaptation of "Green Mansions" ended, were nothing short of pathetic!

I can't resist putting in my oar for the Bem Review Contest, even though I don't know which comics <u>are</u> released in Britain during April. Anyway, <u>you</u> seem to get them pretty fast, so I think I'll review Batman #265, July.

Richard Morrissey.

You blew it, Rich! Reviewing a comic that I haven't got yet is a definite no-no. But thanks for the review--rather than waste a good, up-to-date one like that, I've put it in the Review Section. Did I quote you out of context last time? Just wait until you see what I'm doing next time, hoo-boy!

Dear Mr Lock,

I have read your article (Chronique de Grande-Bretagne) in an issue of Haga and I think you might be of help to me. I need an English correspondent and material from England. Of course, he should understand french or at least be able to read it. I am interested in comic strips and SF. Do you know a British french-speaking comics and SF-lover interested in trading British for French material?

Jean-Pierre Moumon, Villa Magali,

There's a nice offer for Bem readers -- if you'd like a French comics correspondent (very useful for language exams), and also someone to trade SF for French comics, get in touch with Jean-Pierre. And that brings our bumper lettercol to a close--next time you could be featured! But first, however, you've got to write me a letter!

THE ALL-WINNERS SQUAD

Here are the most interesting entries in the Bem Review Contest:

E-MAN ≠7 (March)

If you asked a comics fan what were his or her favourite comics, the answer would almost definitely include Spider-Man, Swamp Thing, Conan, Batman or Warlock--all the regulars. But anyone who mentions E-Man, immediately goes up in my books, because E-Man is a rare breed of comic--not produced to earn a fast buck or to keep a regular schedule issue after issue, but one produced with real enthusiasm, something sorely lacking in most comics today.

For your 10p you get 23 pages of all new material (you can't grumble about poor value with Charlton). The cover by Joe Staton is rather disappointing -- he seems to have tried a wash cover but it hasn't quite clicked - even so it's striking, and has no ugly blurbs or speech balloons.

The E-Man yarn, called "TV Man" by the regular team of Nick Cuti & Joe Staton, is good entertaining stuff, with the return of the Entropy Twins from E-Man ≠2 and Michael Mauser, Detective from ≠3 (who's soon to get his own back-up feature in Vengeance Squad out in July). There's even a cameo appearance of Arachne and Professor Coffin from Midnight Tales -- it's really good the way Charlton characters meet each other.

Another wonderful touch in this story is the way Staton puts little messages and jokes in his panels, like a newspaper headline that reads "Evel Knievel to Jump Atlantic Ocean" or a lorry in the background with "U.S. Snail" written on the side.

Anyway, there you are - a great mag - it even includes a sensible letters page--starring E-Man (Alec Tronn) and his girlfriend, Nova Kane--the funniest couple in comix--E-Man, a wonderful, gentle superhero--innocent, fun-loving--like a kid with amazing powers. His comic brings back the thrills of reading your first comic - even to a collector like myself, who's been into comics for about 5 years--so, while you're picking up Warlock and Swamp Thing, try E-Man--it's a true comic fan's comic!

-Paul Gravett

MAN-THING ≠16 (April)

Although the art is good, I feel that Mike Ploog is still the only artist who can really get the murky, dismal atmosphere of the swamp. Man-Thing as you know has little motivation of his own. He is moved by what he feels, what he feels being supplied by the supporting characters. This issue he is placed in the middle of a conflict between two ways of life. Caught between Eugene Spangler, a pop star who goes to the swamp to write "a most profound and cosmic operatic tribute to ruin, to rot, to all the gorgeousness of dirt and decadence", and Josefsen, a sixty-five year old longshoreman who has nothing better to do in his (forced) retirement than kill "sissies", this includes the aforementioned pop star. While out chasing his daughter, she dared to love an artist, through the swamp, he comes across Eugene. The fight that follows is seen by Eugene as, he man vs now man, and when the Man-Thing takes part, non man. While they fight he writes, until the mad viking buries his axe in his chest. We are then asked, the old and the new, is there any difference? Or are both what they are, out of insecurity and fear. And whatever knows fear...burns at the touch of the Man-Thing.

-Richard Ashford

WULF ≠2 (April)

Right, let's get started. The story itself begins in the middle of a battle which is a bit confusing at first but sorts itself out later on. If you missed the first issue I wouldn't worry about it, it has absolutely nothing to do with this ish which is all about some loony who locks up a city's water supply. There's a couple of pages of fourth dimensional stuff which gave me a headache trying to figure it out (don't try it) but as a whole the art was very nice. While I'm talking about the art I might as well say I thought Wulf's boots looked like wellies but maybe I need glasses. Anyway to top all this the cover was very pretty, better than issue one. All in all a very nice second issue but still a bit too much like Conan with "Northeners" & "barbarians" all over the place. Oh well we can't have it all our own way. -Laurence Milsted

MASTER OF KUNG FU ≠30 (July)

Point One: If I had to slavishly imitate any particular artist in American comics, it would not be Jim Steranko.

Point Two: If I did have to simulate the Steranko style, I would be more inclined to lean towards his layout technique than the actual intrinsic draughtsmanship of his work.

That Paul Gulacy would contest the above points is evident from a glance at this issue. Fortunately, he has Dan Adkins as inker to back up his argument. Actually, Gulacy has picked up some of the more basic elements of a Steranko layout, but I still don't understand the root cause of his affliction. Maybe they had a relationship similar to Adkins and Wood.

The actual story (Doug Moench) is hardly worth mentioning -- it's a sort of cross between Shield ≠3 & Green Lantern ≠86 set in a sort of South of France!

The most curious thing about the story is its title. The only reference I can find to lions is on the last page where one of the characters exclaims "an army of nuclear lions!!" He is actually referring to an arsenal of Sterankoesque missiles, cannon, & mercenaries. It is almost as if the word was inserted purely to justify the title. incidentally, the lionesses (?) on the cover are panthers miscoloured.

This is the first Marvel Kung Fu comic I have bought. It will probably also be the last. -Chris Ash

DEFENDERS ≠22 (April)

I approached this book with considerable interest. The Defenders versus the Sons of the Serpent, on paper anyway, spells out a massacre for the Defenders.

Well, the first encounter between the two was nearly the extreme I thought it'd be. "Fangs of Fire and Blood" is certainly a striking title, and tells the whole story completely. Sal Buscema, who I've always thought of as a rather average artist, turns in a nice job here. Example being: his rendition of the Valkyrie was beautiful. The story is disturbing, if only it applies to America, though, it could be adapted to Britain, in many ways. Gerber, I feel, is trying to make a superhero group show his own moral opinion. The highlight of the mag, for me anyway, was the rat scene, this was horribly realistic, because of the Sal Buscema artwork. The peeping tom, isn't really a mystery, as I'm sure you'll have guessed by now, it is just "fill-in" material.

Gerber's trying to make Nighthawk an interesting character, with yet more of his personal life, but he'll need a lot more material up his sleeve to make a rather "corny" character into an original one. The most heartwarming scene in the mag, undoubtedly, was panel 1 page 15, with Clea, Dr Strange, Hulk (bless him), Wong, Valkyrie & Elena--and of course the little baby. This panel generated warmth and made at last Clea a normal human being. The fire scene was too good for words, and, yet again, very disturbing; so I won't go into this part of the story. As I haven't got my copy of Defenders 23 yet, I don't know the shocking secret of the Sons of the Serpent. Personally I'd like to see Shanna and the Beast join the ranks, but that's only my opinion. -Martin Cohen

MAN-THING ≠16 (April)

Stunning! basically sums up my views on this book. John Buscema, Tom Palmer, and Steve Gerber do a magnificent job.

The Buscema art is superb and the Tom Palmer inks are an added compliment giving mood to Buscema's work. The whole 18 pages are a feast for the eyes.

I would think the story rather than the art is more important in our "Murk Monster's" mag and the talented Steve Gerber excels himself this time on "Decay Meets The Mad Viking". I admire Steve Gerber tremendously for his work on Manny. It's obvious to the most ignorant the time he's put into this mag to produce a quality rather than quantity comic.

This comic will split the fans down the middle -- some will dismiss it as "bizarre rubbish" others will herald it as a masterpiece so you'll either love it or hate it, I loved it. It will also appeal to the younger fan as it has plenty of action and excitement. For a miniscule 8p you can't lose. -Kevin O'Donnell

PLANET OF VAMPIRES #1 (February)

Whilst reading this comic I found myself comparing it with many themes exploited in novels. The beginning where the astronauts land is very reminiscent of Planet of the Apes--the soace craft landing in water, the dinghy, the spear in the back. This imagery is followed by 1984 type guards and Fahrenheit 451 restrictions to name a few. These comparisons, however, do not suggest a lack of originality--the ideas are cleverly remoulded into comic form. The lack of a central hero makes interesting reading and as an SF comic the desired effect is well achieved. Atlas are pioneers at the moment in that other comic groups make unsatisfactory attempts at portraying SF -- Atlas have partly succeeded & only further issues can heighten their growing reputation.

-Paul Hudson

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #5 (April), $1.00

Greetings, effendis, and welcome to issue five of the finest comic book/magazine going. That's a heavy claim, perhaps, but fully deserved. After last issue's magnificent "Iron Shadows in the Moon", comes "A Witch Shall Be Born", 55 pages long (and a change of inkers; from Alcala's moody greys, to Zuniga + "friends" Chua-esque sketchiness) and probably everyone's favourite Conan yarn.

The story is as follows "sweet little queen gets deposed (secretly) by wicked witch-sister (left for dead at birth) who promptly shacks up with local bandit chief and debauches and taxes poor citizens. Conan is Captain of the guard, and for recognising the wicked queenie, gets hung up on a crucifix for his pains!

Rescued by another bandit chief, he eventually usurps command and charges into the wicked queen's lover-boy's troops, and takes city, rescues good queen, and aids/helps/assists various people to kill wicked queen's henchmen and monster (and, somewhere in there, the wicked one herself!)."

A little clichéd perhaps, but boy Thomas has cajoled and egged along the somewhat lethargic Howard tale (and even gives the Barb' a few extra scenes). But the "raison d'etre" for this review is that finally an artist has caught Conan as he is/was/should be. Take a gander at page 20, panel 7. That <u>is</u> Conan, no arty/farty Smith bejewelment; no Frazetta muscle show; pure, unadulterated BARBARIAN. (And the Buscema-designed Vallejo cover comes pretty damn near too!)

"A Witch Shall be Born" by Thomas, Buscema and Zuniga, adapted mightily from the Howard original--kudos, everybody, for a bloody fine example of what comics are all about.

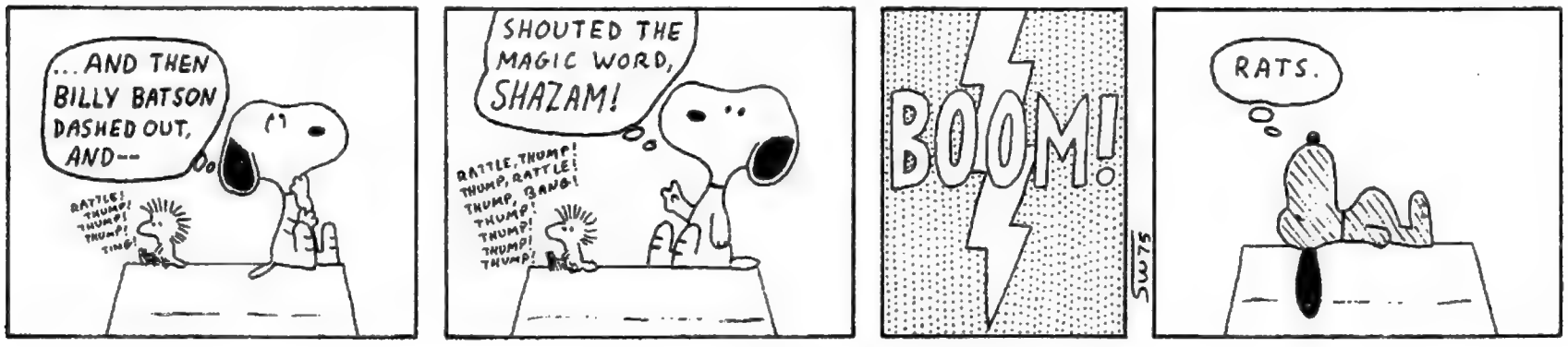
Crom! -Hunter Tremayne

MORLOCK 2001 #1 (February)

All this changing from human to monster and then back again--I get the feeling I've seen it all before. Morlock emerges from what looks like a bloated Triffid acting as incubator--all part of the old professor's greenhouse which is destroyed by flame thrower happy guards who are out to destroy what they call "the deviant". Ironic that Morlock was created to overthrow the dictatorship but is "used" by the dictators to eradicate other such undesirables, poets and the like. Unfortunately the creators seem to be borrowing ideas again -- Big Brother is very apparent even though it is supposed to be 2001 and not 1984. One of the more promising strips from Atlas--there are enough sidelines and loose ends to ensure the strip has a long (and, no doubt, eventful) life. -Paul Hudson

Not a bad bunch of fledgeling reviewers, I hope you'll agree--the contest got a very encouraging response. My apologies to the people whose entries I haven't printed--but 3 pages was all the space I could spare. Three of the reviews printed went over the length limit--of the others, the best were the reviews by Kevin O'Donnell and Chris Ash--they share the first prize. -ML

CAPTAIN NUTS by Schwipe


...AND THEN BILLY BATSON DASHED OUT, AND--
RATTLE! THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! TING!
SHOUTED THE MAGIC WORD, SHAZAM!
RATTLE, THUMP! THUMP, RATTLE! THUMP, BANG! THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!
BOOM!
SCHULZ 75
RATS.

Reviews

BATMAN ≠265 (July)
"Batman's Greatest Failure", by
Fleisher, Buckler, & Wrightson

A few years ago, when "The Murder of Bruce Wayne" (from World's Finest ≠58) was reprinted, my friend Jay Zilber observed in a lettercol that, with a bit of rewriting and better art, it'd make a pretty good story today. Lo and behold, that's exactly what has been done here.

But even more surprisingly, it has been done well! Except for Jonah Hex and (sometimes) Morlock 2001, I'd pretty much given up Fleisher as a hopeless case, but this time he kept his kinkiness under control (for the most part -- but he did dwell on Trenton's disfigured face a little too much) and nicely updated the original, classic plot. The deranged cripple who was determined to witness the murder-by-proxy of his supposed persecutors was now after fellow film actors, rather than the original fellow corporation directors -- perhaps an unnecessary bit of sensationalism, but the added Batman/Gordon scenes, especially the unforgettable one on page 7, more than made up for it.

Buckler & Wrightson meshed smoothly into the most dynamic artistic team since the departure of Neal Adams, leaving poor Ernie Chua out of sight. Occasional masterful poses stand out sharply from the tight, compressed panel structure that crams the maximum amount of story into DC's sadly-depleted page count. All in all, a fine piece of work --Rich Morrissey

LEGEND HORROR CLASSICS ≠1 - 25p

I'm afraid I've got rather mixed feelings about this new fold-out mag from the WORLD OF HORROR folk. The poster of Christopher Lee as Dracula is excellent; Steve Jones has done a fine portrait of Peter Cushing; and there are some well-chosen film stills around. But Kevin O'Neill has attempted to retell Bram Stoker's novel of Dracula in a mere 10½ pages--the strip is doomed by this restriction, while the art proves that real horror is not O'Neill's forte, it is too stiffly stylized and simple for my taste. With better art, and stories more readily adaptable into ten pages, the series could be successful--I hope it will be. --ML

HULK ≠189 (July)
"None Are So Blind..." by Len Wein,
Herb Trimpe, and Joe Staton.

Uhh, this pretty good story about Hulk helping little girl and SMASHING Mole Man. Edwoods like it a lot. Hulk tell story all way through, like Jack Russell do in another comic, Edwoods like that as well. Get 18 pages of story, too. Edwoods also like to see good Trimpe/Staton art. Even puny humans think Hulk do good this time--Edwoods think dumb readers like it, too. --NPE
((Uhh, Editor Emlock worried about strange effects comics having on dumb Edwoods...))

GIANT-SIZE DEFENDERS ≠5 (July)
"Eelar Moves In Mysterious Ways" by
Steve Gerber (assisted by Conway,
Slifer, Wein, Claremont, & Edelman),
Heck, Esposito, and Hunt.

Having the Guardians of the Galaxy along with four Defenders you'd expect to read a rather good story; you'd be wrong. Too many characters + too little plot + too few pages = a below average story.

Same answer with the art. Don Heck can be quite good at times, but he hasn't got a chance, with Murderous Mike - Heck's thin, scratchy pencils aren't the least bit compatible with Esposito's heavy, thick inks. I don't like seeing reprints alongside new material normally, but this time I have to admit that the Daredevil one (≠62) is better than the lead feature -- there's something not quite right about that, isn't there?

Even the letters page is goofed up. Writer Steve Gerber sums it up best when he writes in one caption of a "whole furshlugginer giant-size mess."

A good analysis of this issue, Steve.
--NPE

CHARLTON BULLSEYE ≠1

Produced not by Charlton, but with their assistance by CPL/Gang Publications, this fanzine gets off to a much better start than Amazing World of DC. After 3 pages of news comes an interview with Nick Cuti, a short piece on Dr Graves, a 7-page strip by Jeff Jones, an article on the Blue Beetle, and the first ten pages of a new Cap Atom adventure by Ditko, plus illos by Milgrom, Sutton, Byrne, and Staton.

In all, a fine fanzine--it's a pity that our knowledge of E-Man's cancelation takes the edge off its optimism. --Ruan Lanihorne

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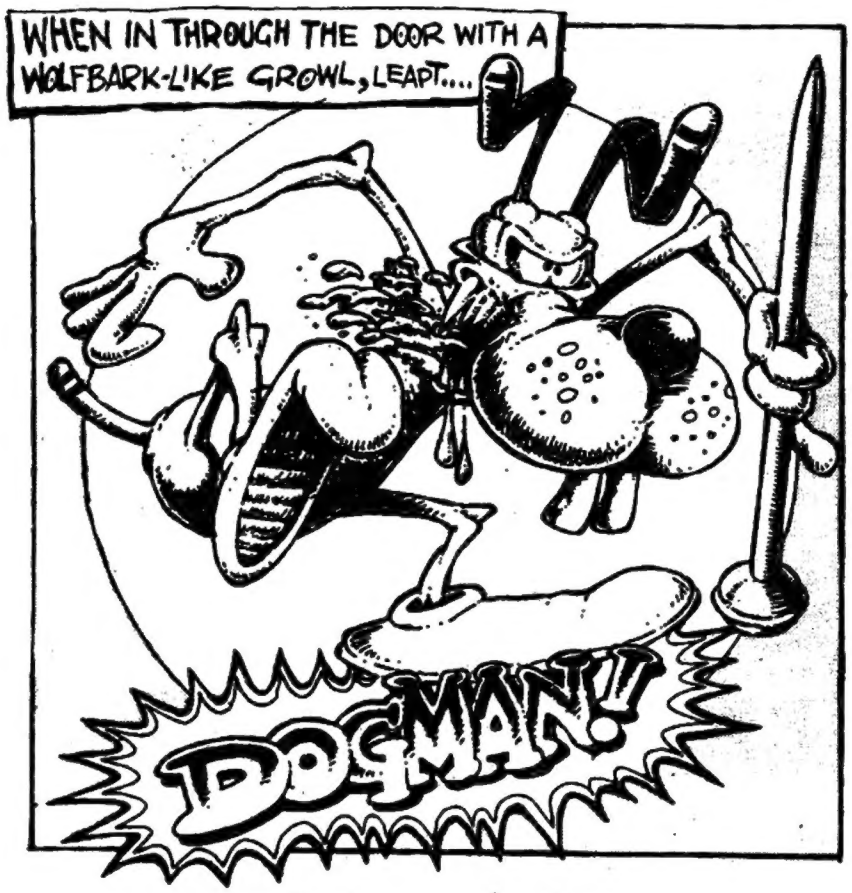

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FIRST ISSUE SPECIAL ≠5 (Aug)

I did want to do a long review for Bem-6 - but did it have to be so narrow? What do you do when your editor has a peculiar sense of humour?

Anyway, Kirby gives us a new Manhunter here; two, in fact, as he re-uses the trick from Mr Miracle ≠1 of having the first hero remove his face-mask to be revealed as an old man just on retirement age.

Manhunter is, we find, rather like the Phantom --a series of champions of the law serving the "Shan", an age-old sect. The costume gives a touch of extra strength, plus agility...

Quite a fair old "1st Issue" --but nobody but Kirby could do it, so it can have no future at DC. -Jonn Hay

SAVAGE COMBAT TALES ≠2 (April)
"Hellride" by Goodwin & McWilliams

As one of the characters would say, not (blank) bad. In fact this is one of Atlas' better comics--a Sarge Fury copy of course, but that's to be expected from the Poor Man's Marvel.

Also in this issue is a back-up strip by Alex Toth with nice art; it reminds me of BLAZING COMBAT--those were the days! -NPE

ADVENTURE COMICS ≠439 (June)
"The Voice That Doomed The Spectre"

In this issue there is a Spectre story which has a plot, some good dialogue, a bit of characterisation & only a slight amount of violence--certainly different from your usual Spectre tale. Plus, GOD makes a guest appearance. I mean, He's got His own Limited Collector's Edition after all--watch for Him in a future Brave & Bold? Good Lord! -NPE

SHADOW ≠12 (September)
"Night of the Damned" by O'Neil & Cruz

Like Frank Hayes in Comic Media News, I never believed that quality would mean the demise of a title, but I'm slowly becoming convinced. Swamp Thing is the only quality book that's commercial, it seems. No, I'm forgetting Spider-Man, although issues of late haven't been up to standard and Batman, which is still interesting and enjoyable after 35 years, but that's about it. If a book is good, it goes. Bat Lash, Creeper, Hawk and Dove, New Gods, Rima, Sword of Sorcery, Scorpion to name but a few - then E-Man. E-Man is brilliant...I particularly recommend him to fans of Eisner's Spirit.

And now comes the crunch...this is the last issue of the Shadow. There is not one of the few 12 issues that I haven't totally enjoyed. Mike Kaluta was great, Frank Robbins was better, and now E.R. Cruz tops them both. Denny O'Neil put some of his best writing for a long time into this book. The covers were great (except ≠5) and, I would have thought, commercial; but, for all its short history, the DC Shadow book has been plagued with cancelations and last-minute artists. And now it finally is gone - all I can do is hope it is revived, at Marvel if not at DC. Shame.

Anyway, ≠12 is well up to standard, tho' the story seemed to be squashed to fit in 18 pages. I think nearer 40 would have been more appropriate. Nonetheless cover, art, and story are all excellent. -Gary Fox

TARZAN ≠239 (July)
"Drums of Death" by Kubert & Reyes

It's okay, I suppose, and good enough to be going on with, but it's so-o boring (as the girl says in the adverts). Tarzan gets led into an adventure, something happens, and in 17 pages it's over--and I hardly even noticed it. Not to say that it needs more pages--with most Tarzan and Korak stories you could fit them into about 6-8 pages--although I do think 17 pages is just not enough out of 36. The new artist, Franc Reyes, did this issue, which doesn't help either--he can't draw jungles OR Tarzan.

When DC took over Tarzan from Gold Key, stories and art showed great promise. Now Tarzan once again seems to be slipping into the same old rut. -Gary Fox

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

I thought that Bem could survive without an editorial--but in the course of getting this issue together, a number of points have come up. To start with, let's thank all contributors and advertisers; next come the art credits. Greg Chown's work appears on pages 4 (pencils), 10, & 11; Superswipe did page 4 (inks), 9, 13, 15, & 16, not to mention Doc Strange on the front cover.

Until Hunt Emerson got in touch with me, I didn't know that anyone except "Cozmic" produced underground comics in England. He sent me a sample of "Pholk Comics", alias Large Cow ≠4--I lent it to Henry Sandwich, CM News u/g reviewer, who returned it with a note saying "Good stuff! Nice, free-form retelling of suitably silly folk-songs. It is inventive, lively--" The conclusion, I guess, is that if you like undergrounds, try the home-grown variety for a change! A copy would cost you 10½p from Large Cow Comixville.

CROM ≠1 18p from Mark Bilsborough, and
EON ≠2 14p from Marc Baines, both arrived too late to be passed on to Ed Sallis. They both have Superswipe covers, plus a review or two by me, and crosswords, articles, and fan art--try 'em, why not?

Dates to remember: COMIC MART LIVERPOOL is on 14th June (and 6th August, and 6th December - write to Zephyr, and the main 2-day London Con is on 2nd & 3rd August at the Regent Centre Hotel again.

One thing there won't be at the two-day Con is a new BEMUSING; Bem-7 will instead be out at the start of October. But, don't despair - August is co-production time, as Bem and Nameless Zine combine to bring you N-ZINE ≠2, full of fun, facts, features, and frivolity (plus news 'n' reviews). Nige Edwards'll be in charge--don't say I didn't give you fair warning! All Bem's regular contributors should be along, so can we expect the pleasure of your company too?

Remember, Nige is a friend of the Hulk!

SKULL THE SLAYER ≠1 (August)
"The Coming of Skull the Slayer" by Wolfman & Gan

Marvel's entry into the caveman field, devised, scripted, and even coloured by Marv Wolfman, took four years to get into print, and underwent a few changes along the way. But, with the "boom" in such books (Kong, Kromag, Korg), it has its chance at last--what a pity it's not very well done...

Jim "Skull" Scully is among the passengers on a transport plane flying through the Bermuda Triangle which mysteriously goes through a time warp into prehistoric times, and crashes -- as a Vietnam veteran and a brother-killer, he's better adapted than the other three survivors, and proves it by killing a dinosaur before the end of this first episode.

So, Skull is a caveman in trousers, a modern man faced with stone age warriors and a tyrannosaurus rex or seven, with a taciturn teenager, a black physicist, and a romantic interest as supporting cast--although he hasn't made contact with them yet, as he was in the other half of the crashing plane. It could be good--but boy, is it over-written! -ML

FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER ≠18 (September)
"The Lady of the House" by Bill Mantlo & Val Mayerik

This is, apparently, the final issue of this Marvel version of the classic monster. Six full-length issues by Mike Ploog & Gary Friedrich saw the book on a monthly schedule, then we had four drawn by John Buscema with only 15 pages of new art, one by Bob Brown--and then with issue 12 Doug Moench took on the scripting and Val Mayerik the art. Only issues 5-7 were monthly, but at least, with ≠16, we returned to full-length tales. A pity Doug couldn't script the book till the end--but Bill Mantlo does a fair-enough job, this last time.

Franky was never as consistent as the top Marvel monsters; only 18 issues, compared with the Werewolf's 34, says it all. Was it the covers? This last time, Val Mayerik was allowed to handle it, with Wrightson inks, and it's the best the book ever had--people like Ron Wilson and Ed Hannigan were allowed to do too many. "Next issue: Baroness von Frankenstein" they say--that, it seems, will never happen. What a pity. -RL

SPIDER-MAN ≠146 (July)
"Scorpion... Where is Thy Sting?"
by Conway, Andru, and Romita etc.

Another interesting issue from Conway & Andru, and I'm sorry to see that Gerry is leaving at a time when he was really getting the feel of the comic (sort of papery, with a glossy cover).

The Scorpion is beaten, and at the end has to apologise to Aunt May for frightening her--see it to believe it. And, no matter what anyone else says, I shall continue to say that I like Ross (no dross) Andru, and I'll keep saying it until people say "Er, well, maybe." -NPE

((And Nigel likes Don Heck art, too!))

JUSTICE INC ≠1 & ≠2 (June and August)
"This Night, an Avenger is Born" by O'Neil & McWilliams; "The Sky Walker" by Denny O'Neil and Jack Kirby.

This is very disappointing; I think that I had perhaps expected too much. In ≠1, The Avenger is out to avenge the murders of his wife and daughter, with the help of Algernon Heathcote "Smitty" Smith, and it all seems uninteresting--the Kubert cover's extremely good, though. The next issue is far worse. Kirby again, and he's at his worst; Benson should be slim, lithe -- not with a figure similar to the Hulk. The only hope for this book is when Kirby leaves DC--E.R. Cruz or Nestor Redondo could be good. -GF